

Gardener News

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2013 PERSON OF THE YEAR



By Tom Castronovo
Executive Editor

Gardener News proudly bestows our 2013 "Person of the Year" to Craig Korb, the executive chef at The Crab's Claw Inn, Lavallette, New Jersey. A long-time columnist for the *Gardener News* who has real energy and desire behind using locally procured items, and a farmer's grandson, Korb is receiving our award for being the first executive chef and "restaurant" in the state to serve a dinner, which is open to the public each fall, featuring "Jersey Fresh produce, Jersey-landed Seafood and Jersey Wine" all in the same meal. He is also receiving it for teaching his daughters Marley, 7, and Lucy, 4, about the importance of locally sourced food.

Korb travels to farmer's markets and local farms on his days off with his family and hand-selects fresh produce for his family's meals and to source fresh produce for the restaurant. Korb also teaches them about New Jersey sea farming and the very freshest catch. Korb receives the majority of his seafood from Viking Village, a certified, state-of-the-art commercial fishing

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Craig Korb

Tom Castronovo/Photo

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Unique Plants

By Bob LaHoff
Nursery Specialist

“The Times They Are A-Changin’”

For those of you who follow my column, I am picking up where I left off last month. During a tribute to Bob Dylan at the 1997 Kennedy Center Honors, Bruce Springsteen spoke of the meaning of this titled article, a Bob Dylan song. Springsteen succinctly described its meaning as a “struggle for social justice in America.” And while this article has nothing to do with political or social change, it has everything to do with climatic change. Recently, I have been involved in talks about trees for the future, specifically trees that are struggling to adapt to our warming climates.

One fascinating study is being conducted at the Chicago Botanic Garden: “Andrew C. Bell, Ph.D., serves as curator of woody plants and is responsible for managing the development of the Garden’s tree and shrub collections. Dr. Bell’s work includes evaluating and promoting woody plants for sustainable landscapes and studying the effects of climate change on urban street trees.” (my.chicagobotanic.org/science_conservation/trees-for-2050/)

Finding trees, now growing in the Garden, which will continue to do well in a warming urban environment, is paramount. The study takes a candid look at some trees growing at the “northern edge of their hardiness” through the year 2050 and beyond. The hard truth is that further data suggests that by 2080 “only 11 percent of the initial trees would continue to do well in Chicago and the upper Midwest.”

The realization is that many trees we are now familiar with may not be around and those we are less familiar with will be. Stephen Schuckman, my longtime friend and owner of First Mountain Arboriculture, has his MA in botany and is an ISA-certified arborist. He shared with me two websites:

USDA Forest Service website, www.fs.fed.us/ne/delaware/atlas/ shows a climate change for 80 Forest Tree Species of the Eastern United States and www.nrs.fs.fed.us/atlas/ has new updates for climate change for trees and birds. The websites are as enlightening as they are scary. Take Sugar Maple, *Acer saccharum*, for example. The projected models have this tree all but gone in the years ahead. Steve says, “It’s fruitless to plant Sugar Maples at this point” and poses the questions: With this tree gone, what will happen to the lumber and maple syrup that this tree provides? Dr. Bell points out two other trees that did not perform well in their study: American Linden, *Tilia Americana*, and Shagbark Hickory, *Carya ovata*.

What we also can take away from these studies, however, are trees that have performed well. Kentucky Coffeetree, *Gymnocladus dioica*, scored high marks. One of the largest trees in Eastern North America, Kentucky Coffeetree is a great candidate for street tree planting as well as residential and park settings. A wonderful native that has been touted as tolerant to the worst stresses nature and humanity have to offer. Kentucky Coffeetree has rich blue-green bipinnately compound leaves that finish yellow in the autumn. Two deciduous conifers that also performed well were common Baldcypress, *Taxodium distichum*, and Ginkgo, *Ginkgo biloba*. Baldcypress offers a tall, columnar to pyramidal habit, with rich-green, feather-like foliage. It is this foliage that turns rusty orange in the fall. Fibrous, reddish-brown bark has always captivated me in the winter months. And while Baldcypress makes an outstanding street tree, many use it as their “Go To Tree” for wet areas. Ginkgo, *Ginkgo biloba*, is a tree that has survived the test of time. Existing unchanged for millions of years, Ginkgo has unique fan-shaped leaves that emerge a bright green and finish the year saffron yellow. Tolerant of just about any setting, Ginkgo makes a handsome, full tree over time and has long been my favorite.

Finally, another top performer in the study, and there are others to talk about in a longer article, is Sweetgum, *Liquidambar styraciflua*. Sweetgum has forever been shunned in residential landscapes because of the “itchy balls” it drops on the lawn. The fruit alone has held back the potential of this tree. Interesting star-shaped green leaves turn shades of yellow, orange, red and purple in the fall. Efforts are being made to select “fruitless” varieties, perhaps ensuring this tree’s success as we all go forward.

My favorite Chinese proverb is: “The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.” And while many take the quote as meaning it’s never too late to accomplish the things you want to in life, for purposes discussed here I am taking it more literally. We need to carefully select trees we plant today for future generations!

Editor’s Note: Bob LaHoff is co-owner of Hall’s Garden Center and Florist in Union County, a member of the Union County Board of Agriculture, the New Jersey Nursery and Landscape Association, the American Boxwood Society, the European Boxwood Society, a members of the Reeves-Reed Arboretum Buildings and Grounds Committee, a lifetime member of the Conifer Society, a member of the NJ Plants Trade Show Advisory Board, and past member of the retail council for Monrovia Growers. He can be reached at (908) 665-0331.

2013 Person of the Year

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dock in Barnegat Light, New Jersey. Viking Village is home port to more than 40 independently owned fishing vessels, including Scallopers, Gillnetters, and Longline boats. Each year, about 5 million pounds of seafood is packed out at Viking Village and shipped both locally and around the world.

In late-June of 2010, discussions between Chef Korb and Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Al Murray took place to craft an all-Jersey dinner. The result of those discussions - The Crab’s Claw Inn officially partnered with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture on July 22, 2010 to incorporate local, fresh produce and Jersey-landed seafood into their menu. New Jersey’s food and agriculture industry, which includes restaurants, produces around \$100 billion a year in revenues, making it the third-largest economic sector in the state. Chef Korb officially plated up the first dinner on October 6, 2010 to a sold-out crowd.

Korb also partnered with the Garden State Wine Growers Association’s “Vintner’s Choice” program in 2010, so he could pair up some of the state’s most prestigious wines with his dinners. As of 2013, New Jersey currently has 46 licensed and operating wineries, with several more prospective wineries in various stages of development.

As patrons arrived at the first dinner, they were greeted at the front entrance with the official New Jersey Department of Agriculture’s farmers’ market cart, filled with *Jersey Fresh* produce. *Jersey Seafood* and *Jersey Fresh* banners were hanging on the front of the building. All of the waitresses and bus persons wore *Jersey Seafood* aprons and *Jersey Fresh* baseball caps. The entire restaurant was decorated with a warm Jersey fall harvest theme. The bright white tablecloth-covered tables were lined with large glass-encased candles, mini pumpkins, gourds, and eggplants, on crisp burlap strips. At each of the following dinners, the Jersey harvest decorations keep getting better.

Special guests attending this historic October 6, 2010 dinner were: New Jersey Assemblyman John F. McKeon; New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Douglas H. Fisher; Scott Ellis, president, New Jersey State Board of Agriculture; New Jersey Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Al Murray; Paul Hlubik, New Jersey state executive director, United States Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency; Troy Joshua, director, United States Department of Agriculture, NASS; Joe Atchison, marketing specialist, New Jersey Department of Agriculture; and Lou Caracciolo, president of the Garden State Wine Growers Association.

In the fall of 2014, Chef Korb and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture will be celebrating the partnership’s 5th Anniversary. As always, this dinner is open to the public and is sure to sell out fast.

New Jersey Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Al Murray says that “the NJ Department of Agriculture congratulates Chef Craig Korb on his selection as the *Gardener News* person of the year. Chef Korb is a true friend of New Jersey’s agricultural community, and has expended great effort in helping the public gain greater appreciation for all New Jersey farm products, seafood, and wines. From his monthly column, where he shares information and recipes for delicious *Jersey Fresh* produce, or *Jersey Seafood*, to his annual *Jersey Fresh* dinner where he brings in New Jersey farmers and vintners to interact with patrons as they enjoy a complete dinner using ingredients harvested from nearby farms. The Department salutes Chef Korb for his dedication and support of New Jersey farmers.”

Sam and Louise Hammer, owners of The Crab’s Claw Inn, said, “When Craig started working for us as a long-haired college student, we had no idea our relationship would become what it has. He is a wonderful son-in-law, husband to our daughter and father to our beautiful grand-daughters. The bonus, though, is that he is a terrific chef! We really hit the jackpot. His knowledge and talents are shown every day in the menu, preparation and care that (Cont. on pg. 20)

Christmas cheer and comfort to a community

Christian Nicholson, president of the New Jersey Christmas Tree Growers Association and owner of the Hidden Pond Tree Farm in Mendham, proudly holds a proclamation from Governor Christie proclaiming the first weekend after Thanksgiving as the beginning of the Jersey Grown choose-and-cut Christmas tree season. It also states that farms throughout our state welcome thousands of visitors each year to experience New Jersey's Four Seasons of Agritourism.

Christmas tree farms are a sustainable resource that keeps land in valuable agriculture production. New Jersey ranks sixth in the nation in the number of Christmas tree growers, with 1,150 farms that grow more than 6,000 acres of Christmas tree in the state. In 1901, the first Christmas tree farm in America was begun with the planting of 25,000 Norway spruce near Trenton. These trees were harvested and sold for \$1 each. The New Jersey Christmas Tree Growers Association holds an annual tree contest, with the grand champion winner hosting the Secretary of Agriculture for a ceremonial tree-cutting.

Governor Christie also proclaimed December 2, 2013 as Jersey Grown Christmas Tree Day, encouraging New Jersey residents to support



the state's farmers and visit choose-and-cut Christmas tree farms, as well as helping their neighbors in need and the military during the holiday season.

Christmas tree growers in New Jersey may participate in the Jersey Grown program, which allows farmers to tag

their trees with the Jersey Grown brand to easily identify that their Christmas trees are grown in New Jersey. Jersey Grown includes quality standards and is similar to the well-known Jersey Fresh branding program for produce and other agricultural products.

The New Jersey Christmas

Tree Growers' Association, organized in 1950, is a statewide organization of growers, professionals and industry leaders dedicated to the promotion and marketing of Christmas trees and related products.

On Tuesday, December 3, 2013, Nicholson donated

a beautiful 17-foot Norway spruce from his award-winning farm to Seaside Heights, which was ravaged by Sandy in the fall of 2012.

Students from Hugh J. Boyd Jr. Elementary School took a bus trip to his farm for a day of fun, which included hay rides, roasting marshmallows, hot chocolate and pizza. Several town council members also made the trip. The buses were escorted by Seaside's Finest. The Mendham Borough Public Works Department delivered the tree.

Nicholson called the tree a "beacon of hope" for all the residents and children of Seaside Heights.

New Jersey's First Lady Mary Pat Christie presented a letter to Nicholson to read to the children as chair of the Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund. She said that this event demonstrates the true meaning of the Christmas spirit and reminds us that the holiday season is a time to count our blessings and come together as New Jerseyans to help our neighbors still in need.

The Paying It Forward Foundation helped make the Seaside Heights Christmas tree day happen.

The tree was placed and decorated in the courtyard of Borough Hall in Seaside Heights. It was lit on Friday, December 6.

Tom Castronovo/Photo/Story

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2013 Person of the Year

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he puts into his work. He is proud of his relationship with the great folks at the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. We are both very happy and excited for him to receive this award, because he has worked hard to show the bounties of the State of New Jersey to all of our customers, and beyond."

The Crab's Claw Inn, a shore landmark since 1979, is located on a narrow barrier island in Ocean County, New Jersey, which runs from Point Pleasant to the north, down to Island Beach State Park at the southern tip. The restaurant sits in the heart of the island between the beautiful Atlantic Ocean to the east and the sparkling Barnegat Bay to the west. The restaurant, which is open year-round, is owned by Sam and Louise Hammer. They employed Korb in 1994, before he attended Johnson & Whales University in Providence, R.I., where he earned an associate's degree in culinary arts and a bachelor's degree in food service management. After college, Korb worked at Postrio in San Francisco, a star-studded restaurant opened by famed chef Wolfgang Puck. Korb also worked for the storied Hayes Street Grill in San Francisco, owned by Patricia Unterman, San Francisco's most respected food critic. After three years of internships, Korb returned to The Crab's Claw Inn and married the Hammers' daughter, Shannon.

Gardener News began the annual "Person of the Year" cover story in 2008. *Gardener News* will annually bestow our "Person of the Year" award to a person who performs exemplary outstanding service to the agricultural, gardening and/or landscaping communities.

Editor's Note: Tom Castronovo is executive editor and publisher of *Gardener News*. Tom's lifelong interest in gardening and passion for agriculture, environmental stewardship, gardening and landscaping, led to the founding of the *Gardener News*, which germinated in April 2003 and continues to bloom today. He is also dedicated to providing inspiration, and education to the agricultural, gardening and landscaping communities through this newspaper and *GardenerNews.com*.